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ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa

Note by the Secretary-General

The sixth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, was held at United Nations Headquarters from 9 to 18 January 1995. The Secretary-General has the honour to submit to the General Assembly the report on that session (see annex).

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ANNEX

Report of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, on its sixth session

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I. INTRODUCTION

Opening and duration of the session

1. The sixth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, was held in New York from 9 to 18 January 1995. The session was convened in accordance with paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 49/234 of 23 December 1994 entitled "Elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa". At its sixth session, the Committee held 13 meetings (1st to 13th). Working Groups I and II each held one organizational meeting.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

A. Officers of the Committee

2. The membership of the Bureau of the Committee was the same as at its fifth session (see A/49/84/Add.2, annex, para. 2).

3. At its 12th meeting, on 18 January, the Committee elected by acclamation Mr. Mourad Ahmia (Algeria) as Chairman of Working Group I.

4. At the same meeting, the Committee decided, in accordance with paragrpah 3 (a) of its resolution 6/1, that Working Group I would have an additional Vice-Chairman.

5. At its 1st meeting, on 18 January, Working Group I elected by acclamation Mr. Mohammad Reza H. K. Jabbary (Islamic Republic of Iran) and Mr. Erwin Ortiz-Gandarillas (Bolivia) as Vice-Chairmen, and postponed the election of the third Vice-Chairman to the next session.

6. At its 12th meeting, on 18 January, the Committee elected by acclamation Mr. Takao Shibata (Japan) as Chairman of Working Group II.

7. At its 1st meeting, on 18 January, Working Group II elected by acclamation Mr. David Etuket (Uganda) and Mr. Anatoli M. Ovchinnikov (Uzbekistan) as Vice-Chairmen.

8. The composition of the Bureaux of the Committee and its working groups was thus as follows:

Chairman: Mr. Bo Kjellén (Sweden)

Vice-Chairmen: Mr. René Valéry Mongbe (Benin)
Mr. T. P. Sreenivasan (India)
Mr. José Urrutia (Peru)

Rapporteur: Mr. Nikita F. Glazovsky (Russian Federation)

Working Group I

Chairman: Mr. Mourad Ahmia (Algeria)

Vice-Chairmen:* Mr. Mohammad Reza H. K. Jabbary (Islamic Republic of Iran)
Mr. Erwin Ortiz-Gandarillas (Bolivia)

Working Group II

Chairman: Mr. Takao Shibata (Japan)

Vice-Chairmen: Mr. David Etuket (Uganda)
Mr. Anatoli M. Ovchinnikov (Uzbekistan)

B. Adoption of the agenda

9. At its 1st meeting, on 9 January 1995, the Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.

2. Work programme for the interim period.

3. Preparation for the Conference of the Parties.

4. Status of signature and ratification of the Convention.

5. Review of the situation as regards extrabudgetary funds.

6. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its sixth session.

C. Attendance

10. Representatives of the following States attended the session: Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea,

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* A third vice-chairman to be elected at the seventh session.

Romania, Russian Federation, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Yemen and Zambia.

11. Palestine was also represented.

12. The following United Nations offices and organs were represented: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

13. The following specialized agencies were represented: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Bank, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

14. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented: Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique, Arab Maghreb Union, Commission of the European Communities, Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Desertification, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Organization of African Unity, Organization of the Islamic Conference, Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel, and Sahara and Sahel Observatory.

15. The Global Environment Facility was also represented.

16. The following non-governmental organizations were represented: Australian Conservation Foundation, Australian Council for Overseas Aid, Association des Volontaires pour le Développement, Both Ends, Consejo Andino de Manejo Ecológico, Earth Action, Environment and Development Resources, Environment Liaison Centre International, Environmental Policy and Society, Environnement et Développement du Tiers-Monde, European Environmental Bureau, Fundación Hernandiana, Haribon Foundation, Instituto de Prehistoria, Antropología y Ecología, International Chamber of Commerce, International Juridical Organization for Environment and Development, Kindernothilfe, Natural Heritage Institute, Sahel Défis: Développement Environnement Formation Insertion Social, Service Extension and Action Research for Communities in the Hills, Society for Conservation and Protection of Environment, Solidarité Canada Sahel, Wilderness Society and World Learning.

D. Documentation

17. The documents before the Committee at its sixth session are listed in appendix I to the present report.

E. Accreditation of non-governmental organizations

18. At its 3rd meeting, on 11 January, the Committee, bearing in mind paragraph 19 of General Assembly resolution 47/188 of 22 December 1992 and rule 49 of the rules of procedure of the Committee (A/AC.241/3), decided to approve the accreditation of the non-governmental organizations listed in document A/AC.241/9/Add.8 (see appendix II, decision 6/1).

III. WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE INTERIM PERIOD AND PREPARATION FOR THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

19. The Committee considered items 2 and 3 of its agenda, entitled "Work programme for the interim period" and "Preparation for the Conference of the Parties", at its 2nd to 6th meetings, from 10 to 12 January. It had before it a note by the Secretariat on the work programme for the interim period and preparation for the Conference of the Parties (A/AC.241/29) and a note by the Secretariat entitled "Compilation of information on implementation of the resolution on urgent measures in Africa" (A/AC.241/30).

A. Urgent action for Africa and action taken in other regions

20. On 16 January, a conference room paper (A/AC.241/CRP.13) entitled "Chairman's conclusions on urgent action for Africa and action taken in other regions" was circulated to the Committee (for the text, see appendix III A).

B. Organization and programme of work for the interim period

21. At its 12th meeting, on 18 January, the Committee had before it a draft resolution (A/AC.241/L.24) entitled "Organization and programme of work for the interim period", submitted by the Chairman on the basis of informal consultations.

22. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/AC.241/L.24 (see appendix II, resolution 6/1).

C. Promotion of public awareness: observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

23. At its 12th meeting, on 18 January, the Committee had before it a draft resolution (A/AC.241/L.26) entitled "Promotion of public awareness: observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought", submitted by the Chairman on the basis of informal consultations.

24. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/AC.241/L.26 (see appendix II, resolution 6/2).

IV. STATUS OF SIGNATURE AND RATIFICATION OF THE CONVENTION

25. At its 1st meeting, on 9 January, the Committee considered item 4 of its agenda on the status of signature and ratification of the Convention and heard a statement by the Executive Secretary of the interim secretariat. In his statement, the Executive Secretary informed the Committee that 95 States and one regional economic integration organization had signed the Convention and that no instrument of ratification had yet been deposited.

V. REVIEW OF THE SITUATION AS REGARDS EXTRABUDGETARY FUNDS

26. At its 7th meeting, on 13 January, the Committee held a discussion on the question of the situation as regards extrabudgetary funds, for which it had before it a note by the Secretariat contained in documents A/AC.241/31 and Add.1. No pledges were made at that meeting.

27. On 16 January, a conference room paper (A/AC.241/CRP.14) entitled "Chairman's conclusions on the review of the situation as regards extrabudgetary funds" was circulated to the Committee (for the text, see appendix III B).

VI. PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE SEVENTH SESSION

28. At its 12th meeting, on 18 January, the Committee approved the draft provisional agenda for its seventh session (see appendix IV).

VII. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ITS SIXTH SESSION

29. At its 13th meeting, on 18 January, the Committee adopted its draft report as contained in document A/AC.241/L.25 and authorized the Rapporteur to finalize it in consultation with the Bureau of the Committee.

APPENDIX I

List of documents before the Committee at its sixth session

Document symbol	Agenda item	Title or description
A/AC.241/9/Add.8	1	List of non-governmental organizations recommended for accreditation
A/AC.241/28 and Add.1	1	Provisional agenda and work programme for the sixth session
A/AC.241/29	2, 3	Note by the Secretariat on the work programme for the interim period and preparation for the Conference of the Parties
A/AC.241/30	2	Note by the Secretariat entitled "Compilation of information on implementation of the resolution on urgent measures in Africa"
A/AC.241/31 and Add.1	5	Note by the Secretariat on the review of the situation as regards extrabudgetary funds
A/AC.241/L.24	2	Draft resolution submitted by the Chairman, entitled "Organization and programme of work for the interim period"
A/AC.241/L.25	6	Draft report of the Committee on its sixth session
A/AC.241/L.26	2	Draft resolution submitted by the Chairman, entitled "Promotion of public awareness: observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought"
A/AC.241/CRP.13	2	Chairman's conclusions on urgent action for Africa and action taken in other regions
A/AC.241/CRP.14	5	Chairman's conclusions on the review of the situation as regards extrabudgetary funds

APPENDIX II

A. Resolutions adopted by the Committee at its sixth session

Resolution 6/1

Organization and programme of work for the interim period

The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,

Recalling the adoption, on 17 June 1994, of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,

Recalling also its resolutions 5/1 on urgent action for Africa and 5/2 on interim arrangements, of 17 June 1994, taking into account article 7 of the Convention,

Recalling further General Assembly resolution 49/234 of 23 December 1994, in which the Assembly decided that the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee should continue to function in order to prepare for the first session of the Conference of the Parties, to facilitate the implementation of resolution 5/1 on urgent action for Africa, to initiate measures relating to the identification of an organization to house the Global Mechanism, including its operational modalities, to elaborate the rules of procedure of the Conference of the Parties and to consider other relevant issues, including measures to ensure the implementation of the Convention and its regional annexes,

Recognizing the need to carry out this new and important mandate as soon as possible to ensure the prompt and effective implementation of the Convention upon its entry into force and to facilitate urgent action for Africa and to promote action in other regions,

Mindful of the limited time available and of the need for simple and flexible working arrangements,

1. Decides to establish two working groups with the following mandates:

(a) Working Group I is responsible for the following issues: to initiate measures relating to the identification of an organization to house the Global Mechanism to promote actions leading to the mobilization and channelling of substantial financial resources, including its operational modalities; to make recommendations for the designation by the Conference of the Parties of a permanent secretariat and arrangements for its functioning; financial rules, programme and budget;

(b) Working Group II is responsible for the following issues: organization of scientific and technological cooperation, in particular the terms of reference of the Committee on Science and Technology, the establishment

and maintenance of a roster of independent experts, and the terms of reference and modalities of work of any ad hoc panels that the Conference of the Parties may decide to appoint; rules of procedure of the Conference of the Parties; procedures on questions of implementation; procedures for conciliation and arbitration; and procedures for communication of information for the review of implementation of the Convention and its institutional arrangements;

2. Decides also that, in addition to the supervision of the two Working Groups, the Plenary is responsible for the following issues: the facilitation of the implementation of the resolution on urgent action for Africa through the exchange of information and the review of progress made thereon and the promotion of action in other regions, the agenda for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties, coordination with other conventions, cooperation with relevant bodies or agencies, and public awareness activities;

3. Decides further that,

(a) The Bureau of each Working Group shall consist of one chairman and two vice-chairmen; additional officers may be appointed by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee if required;

(b) The Chairman of each Working Group shall be an ex officio member of the Bureau of the other Working Group;

(c) Bureau members shall work in close cooperation with the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee;

(d) The Plenary and the two Working Groups shall organize their work in such a way that no more than two meetings are held within the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee at the same time;

(e) The two Working Groups should complete their work expeditiously and, in any case, during the last session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee preceding the first session of the Conference of the Parties in order to allow for its effective functioning from the very first day;

4. Requests the Secretariat to prepare documentation, including inter alia compilation of information and Governments' views, with a view to facilitating the deliberations of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee at the seventh session on the following issues: identification of an organization to house the Global Mechanism, financial rules, programme and budget, designation of a permanent secretariat and arrangements for its functioning, scientific and technological cooperation, draft rules of procedure of the Conference of the Parties, procedures for communication of information and review of implementation, as well as measures taken by Member States and international and other relevant organizations;

5. Also requests the Secretariat, subject to review at the seventh session, to prepare documentation on the following issues with a view to facilitating the deliberations of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee at the eighth session: procedures to resolve questions on implementation, draft annexes on conciliation and arbitration;

6. Invites members of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, United Nations programmes and agencies, as well as relevant intergovernmental organizations, to submit to the Secretariat updated reports on measures taken or planned for the implementation of the urgent action for Africa and action in other regions and requests the Secretariat to prepare a compilation of such reports for the seventh session;

7. Recommends to the General Assembly that, pending the first session of the Conference of the Parties, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee hold two sessions of up to two weeks each in 1996 and two sessions of up to two weeks each in 1997, the venue and timing of which will be decided by the General Assembly on recommendation of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee at the seventh session.

Resolution 6/2

Promotion of public awareness: observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,

Welcoming the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 49/115 of 19 December 1994, proclaiming 17 June as World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought,

Considering that the promotion of action to implement the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, requires public awareness at the local, national, subregional, regional and international levels,

1. Recalls the invitation by the General Assembly to all Member States as well as to all relevant United Nations bodies, within their mandates, and non-governmental organizations to observe the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought on 17 June with a view to promoting public awareness at various levels;

2. Requests the interim secretariat of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, within its mandate and taking due account of existing activities by other United Nations bodies, to make appropriate arrangements to promote public awareness of the Convention with a view to ensuring the success of the observance of the World Day;

3. Invites the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to report to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its third session on the arrangements envisaged by the interim secretariat pursuant to paragraph 2 of the present resolution;

4. Invites the Executive Secretary of the interim secretariat to report to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee at its seventh session on the arrangements made pursuant to paragraph 2 of the present resolution.

B. Decision adopted by the Committee at its sixth session

Decision 6/1

Accreditation of non-governmental organizations

The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, bearing in mind paragraph 19 of General Assembly resolution 47/188 of 22 December 1992 and rule 49 of the rules of procedure of the Committee (A/AC.241/3), decided to approve the accreditation of the following non-governmental organizations:

AKSS
Arab Urban Development Institute
Asociacion Vida Sana
Association Malienne pour la Protection et le Développement de l'Environnement au Sahel (AMPRODE/SAHEL)
Association pour la Protection de la Nature (APN Sahel)
Centre for Overseas Research and Development (CORD)
Climate Network Africa
Development Centre International
International Juridical Organisation for Environment and Development
Jeunesse Pionnière Rurale
Jeunesse Sans Frontières (JEUSAF)
KWIA Support Group for Indigenous Peoples
Reseau d'Experts Volontaires (REV)
Restoration of Environment Against Distress (READ)
Save the Children - Burkina Faso
SOS-Sahel International France
South-South Solidarity
The Together Foundation

APPENDIX III

Conclusions by the Chairman

A. Chairman's conclusions on urgent action for Africa and action taken in other regions

1. The discussion was very rich and demonstrated that an important number of activities and measures had already been undertaken to implement the resolution on urgent action for Africa and that initiatives had also been undertaken in other regions, all of which was encouraging.

2. Affected countries had referred to adopting measures for, inter alia, establishing coordinating agencies and integrating action to combat desertification in broader programmes for sustainable development. Particularly detailed and interesting presentations had been made by Burkina Faso and Mali; those countries also referred to the links with overall environmental policies that had been worked out. Action was also being undertaken to raise awareness and promote popular participation. Many affected countries had already initiated the preparation of national action programmes.

3. Consultations on the preparation of subregional action programmes were well under way at the subregional level; existing organizations were playing a central role in that process. In some cases, a precise timetable for the elaboration of subregional programmes had already been adopted. The Committee noted the important statements of the representatives of the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) and the Arab Maghreb Union.

4. Examples had also been provided on activities in the area of science and technology, a key area that would require close cooperation among all countries concerned. Cooperation among developing countries was also being encouraged.

5. The developed countries were reviewing their development cooperation methods in order to ensure their consistency with the Convention. In addition, the developed countries were seeking ways to improve their coordination at the country level in order to ensure maximum efficiency. Their efforts involved bilateral agencies, multilateral organizations and non-governmental organizations. The approach of appointing a lead country or agency had already been implemented in Mali, for example.

6. The above-mentioned activities were important first steps that should lead to the early establishment of partnerships, as provided for in Committee resolution 5/1 on urgent action for Africa. It was essential that those efforts be intensified and that a real dialogue be conducted to accelerate the process. A number of countries underlined the role of the interim secretariat in facilitating the establishment of such partnerships.

7. Competent intergovernmental organizations were actively supporting the process in their respective fields of activity, bringing their expertise and know-how to bear on the process.

8. The essential role of non-governmental organizations was also strongly emphasized; the Committee took note of a statement by a representative of the community of non-governmental organizations.

9. The sum of those activities was an excellent start in the implementation of Committee resolution 5/1 on urgent action for Africa, but there was no reason for complacency. The problems were enormous and it was essential that action begin without delay: all countries must press ahead with concrete measures that would have a real impact on the ground and would demonstrate that the Convention had resulted in significant change.

10. Countries that had made statements on agenda item 2 were invited to circulate written texts, to the extent possible. With regard to the process for the future, any information that countries wished to circulate in advance of or during the session should be communicated to the Secretariat in order to enable it to compile the information and facilitate the exchange of experience and review foreseen in General Assembly resolution 49/234 of 23 December 1994.

B. Chairman's conclusions on the review of the situation as regards extrabudgetary funds

1. The Committee took note of the note by the Secretariat on the review of the situation as regards extrabudgetary funds (A/AC.241/31 and Add.1), as well as of the oral presentation made by its Executive Secretary. Several delegations expressed their appreciation for the work of the interim secretariat in that connection.

2. It was also noted that the purpose of the discussion was not to agree on a budget but to exchange views on the activities that were to be financed and ascertain the intentions of Governments with regard to funding.

3. It was noted that the interim period was important: sufficient resources must be obtained to carry out necessary activities and to enable developing countries to participate in forthcoming sessions of the Committee. The countries members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) indicated their willingness to continue to support the voluntary funds.

4. At the same time, several delegates referred to the current tight budgetary situation in almost all OECD countries; resources must therefore be put to efficient use.

5. A number of comments were made on the level of activities of the interim secretariat, a question that had to be discussed, since the texts of General Assembly resolution 49/234 (paras. 4 and 9) as well as of Committee resolutions 5/1 and 5/2 (see A/49/84/Add.2, annex, appendix III) gave only general indications for normal secretariat activities and the role of facilitator in the urgent action that needed to be taken for Africa. Even if no one had questioned

whether the terms contained in the above-mentioned note (A/AC.241/31 and Add.1) fell within the broad definition of secretariat functions, as set out in the above-mentioned texts, there was a need to define the role of the interim secretariat in more precise terms, taking into account, inter alia:

(a) The quantity of work that had to be carried out;

(b) Considerations of overall efficiency;

(c) The distribution of work between the interim secretariat and other bodies;

(d) The relationship between central action and action at other levels.

6. Against that background, it was not surprising that diverging views had been expressed on the level of financing presented in the above-mentioned note (A/AC.241/31 and Add.1). The interim secretariat was invited to consider how it wished to present any additional information in order to support requests for the continued financing of the two trust funds. The Chairman expressed the firm hope that countries would respond in such a way that the Secretariat would be able to carry out its tasks during the interim period, taking into account the decision that the Committee would take on the programme of work for that period. It was essential that the interim secretariat be able to work in a stable situation.

7. It was noted that methodological questions needed to be further considered: the relationship between the decisions taken by the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly and the need for voluntary financing should be further clarified during the interim period. It might be desirable to modify the format of the above-mentioned note (A/AC.241/31 and Add.1). The Chairman indicated that he would look into the matter in the light of discussions at the seventh session of the Committee (Nairobi, 7-18 August 1995), which would be particularly important, since the General Assembly would consider the budget for the biennium 1996-1997 at its fiftieth session.

APPENDIX IV

Provisional agenda for the seventh session of the Committee

1. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.
2. Preparation for the Conference of the Parties.
3. Urgent action for Africa and action taken in other regions.
4. Status of signature and ratification of the Convention.
5. Review of the situation as regards extrabudgetary funds.
6. Adoption of the provisional agenda for the eighth session.
7. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its seventh session.